

CLAIMS

What is claimed is:

1. A method for communicating driver specific information of a driver of a fleet vehicle, the method comprising:

5 assigning a fleet vehicle to a driver with a computing system, wherein the fleet vehicle is selectable from a plurality of fleet vehicles;

maneuvering the fleet vehicle into a communication zone, where the communication zone is within a fleet vehicle staging area;

10 temporarily establishing radio communication with the fleet vehicle with a short-range radio transceiver in response to entry into the communication zone; and

communicating driver specific information from the computing system to the assigned fleet vehicle with the short-range radio transceiver in response to identification of the fleet vehicle.

15 2. The method of claim 1, where communicating driver specific information comprises triggering communication between a navigation unit within the fleet vehicle and the short-range radio transceiver absent driver interaction with the navigation unit, where communication is triggered automatically in response to the
20 fleet vehicle coming into range of the short-range radio transceiver.

3. The method of claim 1, where communicating driver specific information includes transferring an intended destination of the driver in the form of a navigation coordinate and a text string indicative of the intended destination.

4. The method of claim 3, where transferring an intended destination comprises automatically displaying navigation information to the intended destination for the driver on a navigation radio.

5 5. The method of claim 1, where communicating driver specific information includes transferring a vehicle interface setting specific to the driver to the fleet vehicle.

6. The method of claim 5, where transferring a vehicle interface setting
10 comprises automatically adjusting a vehicle operator interface corresponding to the vehicle interface setting.

7. The method of claim 1, where communicating driver specific information comprises transmitting a travel itinerary specific to the driver that
15 includes a passenger travel plan and an intended destination of the driver, and providing a status update of the passenger travel plan with the computing system.

8. The method of claim 1, further comprising the initial act of capturing an intended destination of the driver with the computing system and converting the
20 intended destination to a navigational coordinate and a text string descriptive of the intended destination with the computing system.

9. The method of claim 1, where communicating driver specific information comprises establishing communication with a navigation unit in the fleet

vehicle that includes a navigation radio, a global positioning system, a vehicle data store and a vehicle interface.

10. The method of claim 1, where communicating driver specific
5 information comprises transmitting a signal with about 1 milliwatt of power.

11. A method for communicating driver specific information of a driver of
a fleet vehicle, comprising:

capturing an intended destination of a driver with a computing system;

10 assigning the driver to a fleet vehicle subsequent to the capture of the
intended destination, where the fleet vehicle is selected from a plurality of
fleet vehicles;

converting the intended destination to a navigation coordinate and a
text string with the computing system;

15 transferring the navigation coordinate and the text string of the
assigned driver to the fleet vehicle via a short-range radio transceiver in
response to entry of the fleet vehicle into a communication zone of the short-
range radio transceiver; and

20 displaying navigation information to the driver with a navigation radio
included in the fleet vehicle, where the navigation information is based on the
navigation coordinate and the text string.

12. The method of claim 11, where displaying navigation information to
the driver comprises:

receiving the navigation coordinate and the text string with the navigation radio;

developing a route from the navigation coordinate with the navigation radio for use by the driver to navigate to the intended destination; and

5 displaying the text string and the route on a display of the navigation radio.

13. The method of claim 11, where the short-range radio transceiver is capable of communicating over a distance of 100 meters or less.

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14. The method of claim 11, where the communication zone is limited to a fleet vehicle staging area.

15. The method of claim 11, where converting the intended destination
15 comprises the computing system recognizing that additional information is needed for the intended destination and automatically retrieving from other computers the additional information for the intended destination.

16. The method of claim 11, where transferring the navigation coordinate
20 and the text string comprises communicating with a Bluetooth radio frequency standard.

17. The method of claim 11, where transferring the navigation coordinates and the text string comprises communicating uni-directionally in a radio frequency
25 spectrum of less than 300 MHz with an FM tuner included in the fleet vehicle.

18. A method for communicating driver specific information of a driver of a fleet vehicle, the method comprising:

5 reserving a fleet vehicle for a driver with a reservation in a computing system;

capturing a travel itinerary that includes an intended destination of the driver and a passenger travel plan of the driver in a driver profile record within the computing system;

10 converting the intended destination to a navigational coordinate and a text string in the driver profile record with the computing system;

associating a vehicle profile record of the fleet vehicle with the driver profile record with the computing system based on the reservation;

moving the fleet vehicle into communication range of a short-range radio transceiver;

15 transmitting driver specific information that includes the passenger travel plan, the navigation coordinate and the text string to a navigation radio included in the fleet vehicle, where the driver specific information is transmitted with the short-range radio transceiver in response to entry into a communication zone of the short-range radio transceiver; and

20 automatically generating instructions to the driver with the navigation radio to proceed to the intended destination as a function of the navigational coordinate and the text string.

19. The method of claim 18, where automatically generating instructions to the driver comprises instructing the driver with the navigation radio by turn-by-turn driving instructions.

5 20. The method of claim 18, where automatically generating instructions to the driver comprises instructing the driver with the navigation radio by interactive map instructions.

10 21. The method of claim 18, where associating a vehicle profile record comprises the computing system selecting driver specific information included in the driver profile record that is compatible with the fleet vehicle based on vehicle specification information included in the vehicle profile record.

15 22. The method of claim 18, where associating a vehicle profile record comprises the computing system converting selected driver specific information included in the driver profile record to be compatible with the fleet vehicle based on vehicle specification information included in the vehicle profile record.

20 23. The method of claim 18, further comprising displaying the passenger travel plan with the navigation radio; and updating the status of the passenger travel plan while within range of the short-range radio transceiver.

24. A method for communicating driver specific information of a driver of a rental vehicle, the method comprising:

moving a rental vehicle within a communication zone of a short-range
radio transceiver;

triggering establishment of temporary communication between the
short-range radio transceiver and a navigational unit included in the rental
5 vehicle in response to entry into the communication zone;

transferring driver specific information of a driver assigned to the
rental vehicle to the navigation unit via the short-range radio transceiver in
response to establishment of temporary communication, where the driver
specific information includes driver data, an intended destination of the driver
10 and a vehicle setting to set a vehicle operator interface of the rental vehicle for
the driver; and

transferring additional driver specific information from the rental
vehicle with the short-range radio transceiver in response to control and
operation of the rental vehicle by the driver, where the additional driver
15 specific information includes vehicle operational data.

25. The method of claim 24, further comprising:

maneuvering the rental vehicle out of the communication zone of the
short-range radio transceiver;

20 storing in the navigation unit additional driver specific information that
includes at least one of a navigational coordinate and a vehicle interface
setting while out of the communication zone;

moving the rental vehicle back into the communication zone of the
short-range radio transceiver; and

triggering transfer of the additional driver specific information from the navigational unit with the short-range radio transceiver in response to entry into the communication zone.

5 26. The method of claim 24, where transferring driver specific information comprises automatically applying a vehicle interface setting to the vehicle operator interface of the rental vehicle, where the vehicle operator interface includes at least one of audio settings, seat position settings, mirror position settings, cabin temperature settings, radio tuner sound quality settings and radio tuner radio station
10 settings.

 27. The method of claim 26, where automatically applying a vehicle interface setting comprises selecting a radio tuner radio station setting to apply to a radio tuner included in the rental vehicle as a function of the intended destination.

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 28. The method of claim 24, where transferring driver specific information comprises converting the intended destination to driving instructions for the driver.

 29. The method of claim 24, where the intended destination comprises a
20 plurality of navigation coordinates indicative of a plurality of destinations and transferring driver specific information includes determining one of the destinations has been designated as a first destination and automatically displaying navigation information to the first destination on a navigation radio.

25 30. The method of claim 24, further comprising:

maneuvering the rental vehicle out of the communication zone;
re-entering the communication zone;
triggering transmittal of a navigation coordinate indicative of a drop
off point for the rental car; and
5 automatically generating navigation instructions to guide the driver to
the drop off point.

31. The method of claim 30, where trigger transmittal of a navigation
coordinate comprises transmitting to the navigation unit an update to a passenger
10 travel plan of the driver.

32. A system for communicating driver specific information of a driver of
a fleet vehicle, the system comprising:

means for storing driver specific information that includes a navigation
15 coordinate of an intended destination of the driver and an assignment of the driver to a
fleet vehicle;

a short-range radio transceiver coupled with the means for storing driver
specific information;

a fleet vehicle that includes means for providing navigational directions to the
20 driver, the means for storing driver specific information operable to communicate
with the means for providing navigational directions via the short-range radio
transceiver in response to entry of the fleet vehicle into a communication zone of the
short-range radio transceiver,

where the means for storing driver specific information is operable to transmit driver specific information to the means for providing navigational directions upon confirmation of identity of the fleet vehicle.

5 33. The system of claim 32, wherein the means for storing driver specific information comprises a fleet management application, a data store and a user interface.

10 34. The system of claim 32, wherein the means for providing navigational directions comprises a global positioning system, a vehicle data store, a navigation radio and a vehicle interface.

 35. A system for communicating driver specific information of a driver of a fleet vehicle, the system comprising:

15 a computing system configured to store driver specific information that includes a navigation coordinate of an intended destination of the driver and an assignment of the driver to a fleet vehicle;

 a short-range radio transceiver coupled with the computing system; and

20 a fleet vehicle that includes a navigation unit, where the computing system is configured to temporarily communicate with the navigation unit via the short-range radio transceiver in response to entry of the fleet vehicle into a communication zone of the short-range radio transceiver,

 where the computing system is operable to transfer driver specific information that includes the navigation coordinate to the navigation unit upon confirmation of the
25 identity of the fleet vehicle.

36. The system of claim 33, where the short range-radio transceiver is operable to communicate with a Bluetooth communication standard.

5 37. The system of claim 35, where the navigation unit includes a global positioning system, a vehicle data store, a navigation radio and a vehicle interface.

38. The system of claim 35, where the vehicle interface includes a communication port to a wireless communication device.

10 39. The system of claim 35, where the navigation unit is operable to convert the navigational coordinate to driving instructions.

40. The system of claim 35, where the driver specific information
15 transferred to the navigation unit from the computing system includes at least one of a vehicle interface setting and a travel plan, where the navigation unit is operable to apply the vehicle interface setting to a vehicle operator interface of the fleet vehicle and display the travel plan for the driver.

20 41. The system of claim 35, where the driver specific information is stored in a driver profile record, where the driver profile record includes driver data, a travel itinerary and a vehicle setting.

42. The system of claim 35, where the driver specific information is stored in a vehicle profile record, the vehicle profile record includes a vehicle ID, vehicle specification information and vehicle operational data.

5 43. The system of claim 35, where the communication zone is limited to a fleet vehicle staging area.